

# Reading Toolkit: Grade 5 Objective 2.A.6.b

Standard 2.0 Comprehension of Informational Text

Topic A. Comprehension of Informational Text

Indicator 6. Read critically to evaluate informational text

Objective b. Identify and explain additions or changes to format or features that would make the text easier to understand

Assessment Limits:

Connections between effectiveness of format and text features in clarifying the main idea of the text

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## Lesson Seeds

### Reading Grade 5 Objective 2.A.6.b

#### Activities

The teacher will provide students with an informational text, which has a variety of text features. Students will read the text and with teacher assistance determine the author's purpose. Next students should be placed in small groups where they will analyze each text feature's effectiveness in supporting the author's purpose. Students should be able to justify their proposed degree of effectiveness with text support. In general class discussion, each student group will share its findings. Finally the class will list the text features from the highest degree of effectiveness to the lowest degree of effectiveness in supporting the author's purpose.

The teacher will provide students with an informational passage from which all text features have been removed. Students will read the text and with teacher guidance and using only the organizational pattern of the text determine the type of text, its main idea, and purpose. Next, students should be placed in small groups. Each group should determine a single text feature that could be added to the text, which would assist a reader in understanding its content. If possible, students could actually create the text feature. Each group should report the text feature they would add and explain how it would assist a reader. Finally, the teacher should share the passage with its original text features intact so students can judge if the original or their amended passage is most helpful to a reader.

Teacher and students should read an informational passage with a variety of text features and determine together the main idea of the passage. Next teacher and students should focus on the text features of the passage and cooperatively complete a chart like the given sample. Each text feature should be reviewed and determination made about its effectiveness as it exists, complete removal, or adjustment to increase its effectiveness.

Text Feature	Keep/Delete/Change	How does this make the text easier to understand?

As an extension, students may want to create a text feature that is not present and share it with the class to explain its effectiveness. Teacher Note: Once this activity has been modeled, student should be able to work successfully in an independent mode.

The teacher will divide the class into four groups where each group will have the task to focus on print features, graphic aids, informational aids, or organizational aids of an assigned informational passage. As each passage rotates among the groups, each group will focus only on its assigned text feature. They will determine the degree of its effectiveness and whether changing the feature could increase its effectiveness. Once the rotation is complete, as each passage is shared with the whole class, each group will share its judgment of the passage's text features.

## Clarification

### Reading Grade 5 Indicator 2.A.6

To show proficiency of **critical evaluation of informational text**, a reader must form a number of judgments about a text. To begin this process a reader must preview the text and its features and combine that information with prior knowledge to set a purpose for reading. During and after reading, the evaluation of informational text requires a reader to **determine the content of the text, the role of text features, text elements that make that text a reliable source, the author's opinion, argument, or position, the effectiveness and purpose of the author's word choice, and the effectiveness of the author's style**. A full evaluation of an informational text requires attention to each of these elements.

To begin a critical evaluation of informational text, a reader must use prior knowledge and preview the text to establish a purpose for reading. Once a purpose is established, that is followed by a close reading of the text. Next, a reader must judge how well the text provides information for the stated purpose for reading. Then a critical reader should be able to verbalize or scribe an explanation or analysis of the text by focusing on specific sections of that text and detailing how that **information meets or does not meet a stated purpose for reading**.

If that purpose is not met, a critical reader should be able to **identify those pieces of information that are needed to fully construct meaning**. Additional information may include more details within the text, more text features, or adjustments to the organizational pattern or existing text features. To determine what is required for meaning, a critical reader should closely read the existing text and then assess the degree to which the text meets a reader's purpose. A reader should note particularly the organizational pattern of the text and see how well that pattern helps a reader construct meanings from important ideas in the text. Those gaps in information that make it difficult for a reader to construct meaning signal the types of additional information that are needed.

The **analysis of informational text for reliability** is an important aspect in the text's critical evaluation. A reader must first discern how much of the text is factual. Once the factual information is isolated, judgments about its accuracy are necessary. A reader should access information about the author and his/her credentials as a means of assessing the passage's reliability. Depending upon the subject of the text and how current the information is also a reliability factor. When available, a reader can access other texts on the same subject to see if there is a consistency in the information. Finally after looking at multiple texts on the same subject, a reader can determine if the initial text contains the same information as the subsequent texts or if the initial text presents information not contained in the others. A discrepancy in information could point to an inaccuracy in a text or to a more current source of information.

Once reliability has been established, a reader should carefully note elements of text that address the **author's argument or produce clarity of the author's position on the topic**. Additionally, a reader should be attuned to **elements of bias** in the author's presentation of material. After reading is complete, a reader must implicitly understand the stated or implied main idea of the text. From that basis of understanding, a reader should look at the construction of the author's argument, noting any evidence of bias in the argument and looking for a fair treatment of opposing views on the topic. At that juncture a reader should be able to judge the impartiality of the material or the inclination of the author to present a single view of the topic. Based on that text evidence, a reader can make a critical decision about the text's fullness or limits of use to him/herself.

After a reader knows how useful a text might be, a determination can be made about what **additional information could help a reader construct meaning from the text**. Active reading skills will allow a reader to note a stated or implied main idea in the text. Then a reader can identify additional information that would add to, clarify, or strengthen their understanding of the text or the author's viewpoint. A reader's suggestions for additional information could include, but not be limited to

- Text features such as bulleted lists, captions, graphics, italicized or bold print etc.
- Information to address readers' questions that were not answered in the text
- Context clues, footnotes, or glossed words to help a reader understand unfamiliar words and phrases

A critical evaluation of a text also demands that a reader detect **words that authors use to affect a reader's feelings**. A critical reader can determine a reason for the author's word choice and the response the author wished to evoke. At the center of any persuasive text is a strong opinion, and authors use words to their advantage to create a strong emotional appeal to a reader. Repetition, rhetorical questions, hyperbole etc...all have the power to sway a reader's perceptions. A critical reader is aware of the power of words and examines this word choice to discern the author's tone. For example, a critical reader should be able to discern the difference in tone between "The hero was brave as he flew into the battle alone." from "The pilot was foolhardy flying into battle without cover." A critical reader must also note the portion of text where repetitions occur and determine why an author would wish to draw attention to that portion of text. Critical readers are aware of these elements and should be able to determine if they enhance an author's viewpoint. Finally critical readers should isolate elements that are used purely for emotional appeal and are not supported by fact.

Ultimately a critical reader should be able to **analyze an author's style** which is how an author uses language to relay ideas. An author's particular style has a direct effect upon the meaning of a text. For example, authors may use formal language to convey the seriousness of material or informal language to address the entertainment value of a topic. Or an author may use an informal style with a serious topic to evoke a particular response and cause a critical reader to consider why an author would not match style to topic. That disconnect between style and topic has a critical effect upon construction of meaning. A critical reader should also note how the author forms and uses sentences. The constant use of long, involved sentences or short, choppy sentences or a combination of both can alert a reader to a variety of emphases within a text. An author might use this stylistic formula to draw attention to a particular idea or to diminish the effect of an idea. Using sentence fragments is another way authors can achieve those same effects. Finally a critical reader should be aware that how the author uses language, makes choices about words, and constructs sentences that are planned so that a critical reader can develop insight into the author's intended meaning of a text.

## Sample Item #1 Brief Constructed Response (BCR) Item with Annotated Student Responses

### Question

Read these 'articles' about writing for yourself. Then answer the following.

What text feature could have been added to help a reader better understand the information in the passage from "How to Write Poetry?" In your response, use information from the article that supports your answer.

Write your explanation on the lines in your Answer Book.

### Annotated Student Responses

A reader could better understand  
How to write poetry if some  
 of the words were in italics.

An example would be diary  
 and journal (in the first paragraph)  
 so the reader would understand  
 diary and journal.

Annotation: The student answers that placing certain words in italics like diary and journal would help the reader "understand diary and journal." The student answers the question and accesses the text to suggest particular words that could be italicized. To improve this response, the student should return to the text to gather information about both diary and journal contained in the passage. Next the student should clarify how italicizing diary and journal will help a student further their understanding of those two words.

I think that they could change the title because "How to Write Poetry" isn't really good because the article is telling you about the difference between a journal and a diary.

Annotation: The student answers that "they could change the title" because the title "isn't really good" and "the article is telling you about the difference between a journal and a diary." The student answers the question and supplies a text-based reason for the change in text feature. To improve this response, the student should explain more about the disconnect between the title and the content. Next the student should offer an alternate title and using text support explain how this title better fits the content of the passage.

A text feature that could been added is a picture with a caption. The would give you a little more back round clues. The caption tells what the picture is or doing.

Annotation: The student answers that "a picture with a caption" could be added because it "would give you a little more background clues." The student continues, "the caption tells what the picture is or doing." The student answers the question, supplies a reason for the suggested text feature, and clarifies the function of the text feature. To improve this response, the student could pinpoint a portion of text that could be made easier to understand with the inclusion of a captioned picture and then explain how that portion of text is made more accessible with that text feature.

## Handouts

## from Keeping a Journal

By Trudi Strain Trueit

A journal is a record of feelings, thoughts, experiences, challenges, and goals from your personal point of view. It is your likes and dislikes, successes and struggles, values and viewpoints. It is what you think about, go through, cope with, and long for on your travels. Your journal is a mosaic of everything and anything that is important to you. Just like a real mosaic, where you cannot usually see the design in the artwork until you step away from the tiny bits of embedded glass, stone, and tile, so it is with a journal. Each day, you place another small piece of yourself into it. When you move back, you are able to view the full picture of your life's journey.

The word journal comes from the French word *jour*, meaning "the day." Similarly, the English term *diary* is taken from the Latin word for "daily": *diurnal*. Originally, a *journey* referred to how far a person could travel in a single day. Therefore, a journal reflected someone's written account of his or her day. A journal and a diary are the same thing, though "journal" is currently the more popular term.

Today, a journal is no longer a list of someone's daily activities. Modern journals are limited only by the imagination of their authors. The type of journal you choose, its design, and its content are all up to you. Your journal may be a spiral notebook filled with original poetry and stories, a leather-bound sketchbook or artwork, photographs tucked into a scrapbook, or an on-line journal. You may use words, drawings, photos, mementos, video, or audio to record your journey. While every journal is an unique as its owner, they all have one thing in common: Each is a true expression of the heart.

## A Questioning Spirit

At age eight, a boy named Elwyn Brooks began keeping a journal. For the next twenty years, he would detail his thoughts, feelings, and struggles to overcome shyness. Elwyn Brooks grew up to be E.B. White, author of *Stuart Little* and *Charlotte's Web*. In 1970, White wrote a book called *The Trumpet of the Swan*. In it, the main character, Sam Beaver, writes in his journal every night before bedtime, always ending each entry with a question so he'll have something to think about as he's drifting off to sleep. Did writer E.B. White end his own journal entries the same way? Perhaps, but we'll never know for sure. Upon his request, White's personal journals were destroyed after his death in 1985.

## from How to Write Poetry

By by Paul. B. Janeczko

What is a journal? Good question. Some people think it's a book in which you write things that happened to you each day. But if that's a journal, what's a diary? Another good question. So maybe before you can decide if you want to keep a journal, you need to know the difference between a diary and a journal.



For starters, both are, of course, books that you write in. But since a diary usually has a space for each day of the year, it comes with the expectation that you will write something each day and that your writing will be limited to the space provided for that day.

A journal is different. With a journal there are no expectations to write something every day. Nor is there any space limitation. You can write as often as you like in a journal. You can write a few sentences or many pages. And a journal can hold more than just writing. You might think of it as a gigantic shoe box that can hold all sorts of treasures and memories. It can be a mailbox, where you store letters. It can be a sketchbook and a photo album. A journal can be a combination of all these things.

## Rubric - Brief Constructed Response (BCR)

### Score 3

The response demonstrates an understanding of the complexities of the text.

- Addresses the demands of the question
- Effectively uses text-relevant<sup>1</sup> information to clarify or extend understanding

### Score 2

The response demonstrates a general understanding of the text.

- Partially addresses the demands of the question
- Uses text-relevant<sup>1</sup> information to show understanding

### Score 1

The response demonstrates a minimal understanding of the text.

- Minimally addresses the demands of the question
- Uses minimal information to show some understanding of the text in relation to the question

### Score 0

The response is completely incorrect, irrelevant to the question, or missing.<sup>2</sup>

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Text-relevant: This information may or may not be an exact copy (quote) of the text but is clearly related to the text and often shows an analysis and/or interpretation of important ideas. Students may incorporate information to show connections to relevant prior experience as appropriate.

<sup>2</sup> An exact copy (quote) or paraphrase of the question that provides no new relevant information will receive a score of "0".

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